

# **FACT SHEET**

## **AB 999 – Skinner**

### **Juvenile Justice: Opportunities for Success**

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#### **PROBLEM**

Youth in California's youth prison system serve the longest sentences in the nation. In 2004, California's average length of stay was three times as long as the average sentences of 19 other states. Based on an indeterminate sentencing scheme, youth are imprisoned in the Division of Juvenile Justice ("DJJ") an average of nearly 3 years.<sup>1</sup> More than a third of that time is due to "time adds." Time adds are disciplinary sanctions that delay parole consideration dates by up to one year. Parole consideration dates (PCDs) are set by DJJ when a youth arrives at DJJ, and represent the earliest date that a youth could be eligible for release on parole.

DJJ spends \$234,000 per youth, per year. Time adds tack on an additional net average 12.7 months to a youth's stay. That amounts to \$247,650 in additional expenses for each youth at DJJ. Time adds for the entire population of youth currently at DJJ will cost the state over \$418,528,500.

Currently, wards incarcerated in Juvenile Justice Facilities do not enjoy the same benefits of their adult counterparts from participation in available programming. Adult prisoners are able to earn "good time" credits towards an early release, whereas juvenile wards earn no such credit for participation. Additionally, the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has the authority to delay youths' parole hearings, increasing their confinement time without such due process guarantees as the right to an attorney.

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#### **EXISTING LAW**

Existing law allows DJJ to extend a ward's parole consideration date from one to not more than 12 months. Existing law establishes a complicated "good time" system that does not provide day-for-day credit.

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#### **THIS BILL**

This bill would provide for earlier opportunities for parole consideration for youth as incentive for them to participate in programs. Specifically, this bill amends state law to remove the authority of DJJ to extend the parole consideration date of juvenile offenders; and allows juvenile wards to receive day-for-day "program time" credits for participation in vocational, educational, rehabilitation, and drug treatment (etc.) programs. "Program Credits" can earn juveniles an earlier Parole Hearing.

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#### **SUPPORT**

Asian Law Caucus  
Books Not Bars (Sponsor)  
California Church IMPACT  
Commonweal, Juvenile Justice Program  
Friends Committee on Legislation of California  
Greenlining Institute  
Legal Services for Children  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
Prison Law Office  
W. Haywood Burns Institute  
Youth Law Center

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#### **OPPOSITION**

California District Attorneys Association